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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539 540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674 675 676 677 678 679 680 681 682 683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700 701 702 703 704 705 706 707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719 720 721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740 741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750 751 752 753 754 755 756 757 758 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000 1001 1002 1003 1004 1005 1006 1007 1008 1009 1010 1011 1012 1013 1014 1015 1016 1017 1018 1019 1020 1021 1022 1023 1024 1025 1026 1027 1028 1029 1030 1031 1032 1033 1034 1035 1036 1037 1038 1039 1040 1

**(43) International Publication Date**  
**16 January 2003 (16.01.2003)**

**(10) International Publication Number**  
**WO 03/004819 A2**

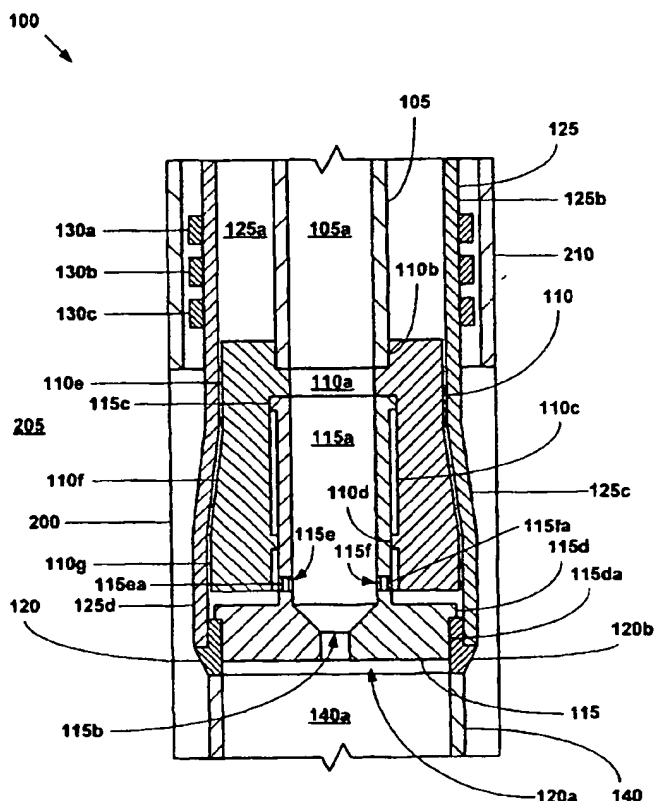
**PCT**

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| <p>(51) <b>International Patent Classification<sup>7</sup>:</b></p> <p>(21) <b>International Application Number:</b></p> <p>(22) <b>International Filing Date:</b></p> <p>(25) <b>Filing Language:</b></p> <p>(26) <b>Publication Language:</b></p> <p>(30) <b>Priority Data:</b></p> <p>(71) <b>Applicant (for all designated States except US):</b></p> <p>(72) <b>Inventors; and</b></p> <p>(75) <b>Inventors/Applicants (for US only):</b></p> | <p><b>E21B</b></p> <p>PC11/US02/20256</p> <p>26 June 2002 (26.06.2002)</p> <p>English</p> <p>English</p> <p>60/303,740      6 July 2001 (06.07.2001)      US</p> <p><b>ENVENTURE GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY [US/US];</b> 16200 A. Park Row, Houston, TX 77084 (US).</p> <p><b>COOK, Robert, Lance [US/US];</b> 934 Caswell Court, Katy, TX 77450 (US).</p> <p><b>RING, Lev [RU/US];</b> 14126 Heatherhill Place, Houston,</p> | <p>TX 77077 (US). <b>BRISCO, David, Paul [US/US];</b> 405 Westridge Drive, Duncan, OK 73533 (US).</p> <p>(74) <b>Agents: MATTINGLY, Todd et al.;</b> Haynes &amp; Boone, LLP, Suite 4300, 1000 Louisiana Street, Houston, TX 77002-5012 (US).</p> <p>(81) <b>Designated States (national):</b> AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.</p> <p>(84) <b>Designated States (regional):</b> ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR,</p> |
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*[Continued on next page]*

(54) Title: LINER HANGER

**(57) Abstract:** An apparatus and method for forming or repairing a wellbore casing by radially expanding a tubular liner.



**WO 03/004819 A2**



GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent  
(BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR,  
NE, SN, TD, TG).

**Published:**

*without international search report and to be republished  
upon receipt of that report*

**Declaration under Rule 4.17:**

*— of inventorship (Rule 4.17(iv)) for US only*

*For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guid-  
ance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the begin-  
ning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.*

## LINER HANGER

## Cross Reference To Related Applications

This application claims the benefit of the filing date of U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/303,740, attorney docket no. 25791.61, filed on 7/6/2001, the disclosure of which is  
5 incorporated herein by reference.

This application is related to the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/440,338,  
10 attorney docket no. 25791.9.02, filed on 11/15/1999, (5) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/523,460, attorney docket no. 25791.11.02, filed on 3/10/2000, (6) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/512,895, attorney docket no. 25791.12.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (7) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/511,941, attorney docket no. 25791.16.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (8) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/588,946, attorney docket no. 25791.17.02, filed on 6/7/2000, (9) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/559,122,  
15 attorney docket no. 25791.23.02, filed on 4/26/2000, (10) PCT patent application serial no. PCT/US00/18635, attorney docket no. 25791.25.02, filed on 7/9/2000, (11) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/162,671, attorney docket no. 25791.27, filed on 11/1/1999, (12) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/154,047, attorney docket no. 25791.29, filed on 9/16/1999, (13) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,082, attorney docket no. 25791.34, filed on  
20 10/12/1999, (14) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,039, attorney docket no. 25791.36, filed on 10/12/1999, (15) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,033, attorney docket no. 25791.37, filed on 10/12/1999, (16) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/212,359, attorney docket no. 25791.38, filed on 6/19/2000, (17) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/165,228, attorney docket no. 25791.39, filed on 11/12/1999, (18) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,443, attorney docket no. 25791.45, filed on 7/28/2000, (19) U.S.  
25 provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,645, attorney docket no. 25791.46, filed on 7/28/2000, (20) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/233,638, attorney docket no. 25791.47, filed on 9/18/2000, (21) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/237,334, attorney docket no. 25791.48, filed on 10/2/2000, (22) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/270,007, attorney  
30 docket no. 25791.50, filed on 2/20/2001; (23) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/262,434, attorney docket no. 25791.51, filed on 1/17/2001; (24) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/259,486, attorney docket no. 25791.52, filed on 1/3/2001; and (25) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/303,711, attorney docket no. 25791.44, filed on 7/6/01, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

### Background of the Invention

This invention relates generally to wellbore casings, and in particular to wellbore casings that are formed using expandable tubing.

Conventionally, when a wellbore is created, a number of casings are installed in the borehole  
5 to prevent collapse of the borehole wall and to prevent undesired outflow of drilling fluid into the formation or inflow of fluid from the formation into the borehole. The borehole is drilled in intervals whereby a casing which is to be installed in a lower borehole interval is lowered through a previously installed casing of an upper borehole interval. As a consequence of this procedure the casing of the lower interval is of smaller diameter than the casing of the upper interval. Thus, the casings are in a  
10 nested arrangement with casing diameters decreasing in downward direction. Cement annuli are provided between the outer surfaces of the casings and the borehole wall to seal the casings from the borehole wall. As a consequence of this nested arrangement a relatively large borehole diameter is required at the upper part of the wellbore. Such a large borehole diameter involves increased costs due to heavy casing handling equipment, large drill bits and increased volumes of drilling fluid and  
15 drill cuttings. Moreover, increased drilling rig time is involved due to required cement pumping, cement hardening, required equipment changes due to large variations in hole diameters drilled in the course of the well, and the large volume of cuttings drilled and removed.

The present invention is directed to overcoming one or more of the limitations of the existing procedures for forming wellbores and wellheads.

### 20 Summary of the Invention

According to one aspect of the present invention, a method of coupling a radially expandable tubular member to a preexisting structure is provided that includes positioning the tubular member within the preexisting structure, injecting fluidic materials into the tubular member, sensing the operating pressure of the fluidic materials, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the  
25 tubular member into contact with the preexisting structure when the sensed operating pressure exceeds a predetermined amount.

According to another aspect of the present invention, an apparatus for coupling a radially expandable tubular member to a preexisting structure is provided that includes a tubular support member including a first passage, a tubular expansion cone coupled to the tubular support member defining a second passage and including an internal flange, a tubular shoe movably received within  
30 the second passage of the tubular expansion cone defining one or more radial passages and a valveable passage fluidically coupled to the first passage and including an external flange for engaging the internal flange, one or more pressure relief valves positioned in corresponding ones of the radial passages, and an expandable tubular member movably coupled to the tubular expansion cone.

35 According to another aspect of the present invention, a system for coupling a radially expandable tubular member to a preexisting structure is provided that includes means for positioning the tubular member within the preexisting structure, means for injecting fluidic materials into the

tubular member, means for sensing the operating pressure of the fluidic materials, and means for radially expanding the tubular member into contact with the preexisting structure when the sensed operating pressure exceeds a predetermined amount.

#### Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of an embodiment of a liner hanger positioned within a wellbore including a preexisting section of wellbore casing.

Fig. 2 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of the injection of a fluidic material into the apparatus of Fig. 2.

Fig. 3 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of the placement of a ball into the valveable passage of the tubular shoe of the apparatus of Fig. 2.

Fig. 4 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of the continued injection of the fluidic material into the apparatus of Fig. 3 in order to burst the burst discs.

Fig. 5 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of the continued injection of the fluidic material into the apparatus of Fig. 4 in order to plastically deform and radially expand the expandable tubular member.

Fig. 6 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of the completion of the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the expandable tubular member of the apparatus of Fig. 5.

#### Detailed Description of the Illustrative Embodiments

An apparatus and method for plastically deforming a tubular liner within a wellbore within a subterranean formation is provided. The apparatus and method thereby provides a system for coupling a radially expandable tubular liner to an open hole or cased section of a wellbore within a subterranean formation. Furthermore, in this manner, a wellbore casing, a pipeline, or a structural support may be formed or repaired using the present illustrative embodiments.

Referring initially to Fig. 1, an embodiment of an apparatus 100 for radially expanding and plastically deforming a tubular liner includes a tubular support member 105 that defines a passage 105a that is coupled to a tubular expansion cone 110 that defines a passage 110a and includes a recess 110b for mating with and receiving the tubular support member 105, a recess 110c, and an internal flange 110d. The tubular expansion cone 110 further includes a first section 110e having a substantially cylindrical outer surface, a second section 110f having a substantially tapered conical outer surface, and a third section 110g having a substantially cylindrical outer surface. In an exemplary embodiment, the outside diameter of the first section 110e is greater than the outside diameter of the third section 110g. In an exemplary embodiment, the recess 110b includes internal threads and the end of the tubular support member 105 that is received within the recess 110b includes external threads for engaging the internal threads.

An end of a tubular shoe 115 mates with and is movably received within the recess 110c of the tubular expansion cone 110 that defines a passage 115a and a valveable passage 115b and includes an external flange 115c, and an external flange 115d including a recessed portion 115da. The tubular

shoe 115 further includes radial passages 115e and 115f for receiving corresponding burst discs, 115ea and 115fa. An end of a tubular support member 120 that defines a passage 120a mates with and is movably received within the recess 115da of the external flange 115d of the tubular shoe 115 and includes an external flange 120b having a substantially conical outer surface.

5 An end of an expandable tubular member 125 mates with and is coupled to the tubular support member 120 that defines a passage 125a for receiving the tubular support member 105, the tubular expansion cone 110, and the tubular shoe 115. In an exemplary embodiment, the end of the expandable tubular member 125 is coupled to the tubular support member 120 by a conventional threaded connection. In an exemplary embodiment, the expandable tubular member 125 includes a  
10 first section 125b having a substantially cylindrical outer surface, a second section 125c having a substantially conical outer surface, and a third section 125d having a substantially cylindrical outer surface. In an exemplary embodiment, the outside diameter of the first section 125b is greater than the outside diameter of the third section 125d. a plurality of tubular sealing members, 130a, 130b, and 130c, are coupled to the external surface of the first section 125b of the expandable tubular member  
15 125.

An end of a tubular member 140 that defines a passage 140a is coupled to an end of the tubular support member 120. In an exemplary embodiment, the connection between the tubular member 140 and the tubular support member 120 is a conventional threaded connection.

20 In an exemplary embodiment, as illustrated in Fig. 1, the apparatus 100 may be positioned within a wellbore 200 within a subterranean formation 205 that includes a preexisting section of wellbore casing 210. The wellbore 200 may be vertical, horizontal, or an intermediate orientation.

As illustrated in Fig. 2, a fluidic material 215 may then be injected into the apparatus 100 through the passages 105a, 110a, 115a, 115b, and 140a in order to ensure the proper operation of the passages. In an alternative embodiment, before or after the injection of the fluidic material 215, a  
25 hardenable fluidic sealing material such as, for example, cement, may be injected into the apparatus 100, through the passages 105a, 110a, 115a, 115b, and 140a, in order to form an annular body of a fluidic sealing material between the tubular member 125 and the wellbore 200.

As illustrated in Fig. 3, a ball 220 may then be placed into the valveable passage 115b of the tubular shoe 115 by introducing the ball into the injected fluidic material 215. In this manner, the  
30 valveable passage 115b of the tubular shoe 115 may be sealed off thereby permitting the passage 115a to be pressurized by the continued injection of the fluidic material 215.

As illustrated in Fig. 4, the continued injection of the fluidic material 215 will burst the burst discs 115ea and 115fa thereby permitting the injected fluidic material to pass through the radial passages 115e and 115f into the annular region between the tubular shoe 115 and the expandable  
35 tubular member 125 below the tubular expansion cone 110 above the external flange 115d of the tubular shoe.

As illustrated in Fig. 5, the continued injection of the fluidic material 215 will continue to

pressurize the annular region, between the tubular shoe 115 and the expandable tubular member 125 below the tubular expansion cone 110 above the external flange 115d of the tubular shoe, and thereby extrude the expandable tubular member 125 off of the tubular expansion cone 110 by plastically deforming and radially expanding the expandable tubular member.

5 During the continued radial expansion of the expandable tubular member 125, the tubular support member 105 and the tubular expansion cone 110 may be raised out of the wellbore 200. Because the tubular expansion cone 110 and the tubular shoe 115 are movably coupled, the axial displacement of the tubular expansion cone 110 during the radial expansion of the tubular member 125 does not displace the tubular shoe in the axial direction. In an exemplary embodiment, during the  
10 radial expansion and plastic deformation of the expandable tubular member 125, the tubular shoe 120 is supported by the tubular support member 120 in the axial direction.

In an exemplary embodiment, the radial expansion of the expandable tubular member 125 further causes the sealing members, 130a, 130b, and 130c, to engage the preexisting wellbore casing 210. In this manner, the radially expanded tubular member 125, the tubular support member 120, and  
15 the tubular member 140 are coupled to the preexisting wellbore casing. Furthermore, in this manner, a fluidic seal is provided between the radially expanded tubular member 125 and the preexisting wellbore casing 210.

As illustrated in Fig. 6, once the radial expansion of the expandable tubular member 125 has been completed, the tubular support member 105, the tubular expansion cone 110, and the tubular  
20 shoe 115 are removed from the wellbore 200. In particular, the external flange 115c of the tubular shoe 115 engages the internal flange 110d of the tubular expansion cone 110 thereby permitting the tubular shoe to be removed from the wellbore 200.

In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus 100, and method of operating the apparatus, is provided substantially as disclosed in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial  
25 no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/440,338, attorney docket no. 25791.9.02, filed on 11/15/1999, (5) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/523,460, attorney docket no. 25791.11.02, filed on 3/10/2000, (6) U.S. patent application serial  
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10/12/1999, (14) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,039, attorney docket no. 25791.36, filed on 10/12/1999, (15) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,033, attorney docket no. 25791.37, filed on 10/12/1999, (16) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/212,359, attorney docket no. 25791.38, filed on 6/19/2000, (17) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/165,228, attorney docket no. 25791.39, filed on 11/12/1999, (18) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,443, attorney docket no. 25791.45, filed on 7/28/2000, (19) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,645, attorney docket no. 25791.46, filed on 7/28/2000, (20) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/233,638, attorney docket no. 25791.47, filed on 9/18/2000, (21) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/237,334, attorney docket no. 25791.48, filed on 10/2/2000, (22) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/270.007, attorney docket no. 25791.50, filed on 2/20/2001; (23) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/262,434, attorney docket no. 25791.51, filed on 1/17/2001; (24) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/259,486, attorney docket no. 25791.52, filed on 1/3/2001; and (25) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/303,711, attorney docket no. 25791.44, filed on 7/6/01, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

It is understood that variations may be made in the foregoing without departing from the scope of the invention. For example, the apparatus 100 may be used to form and/or repair, for example, a wellbore casing, a pipeline, or a structural support. Furthermore, the burst discs 115a and 115fa may be replaced with conventional pressure relief valves.

Although illustrative embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, a wide range of modification, changes and substitution is contemplated in the foregoing disclosure. In some instances, some features of the present invention may be employed without a corresponding use of the other features. Accordingly, it is appropriate that the appended claims be construed broadly and in a manner consistent with the scope of the invention.



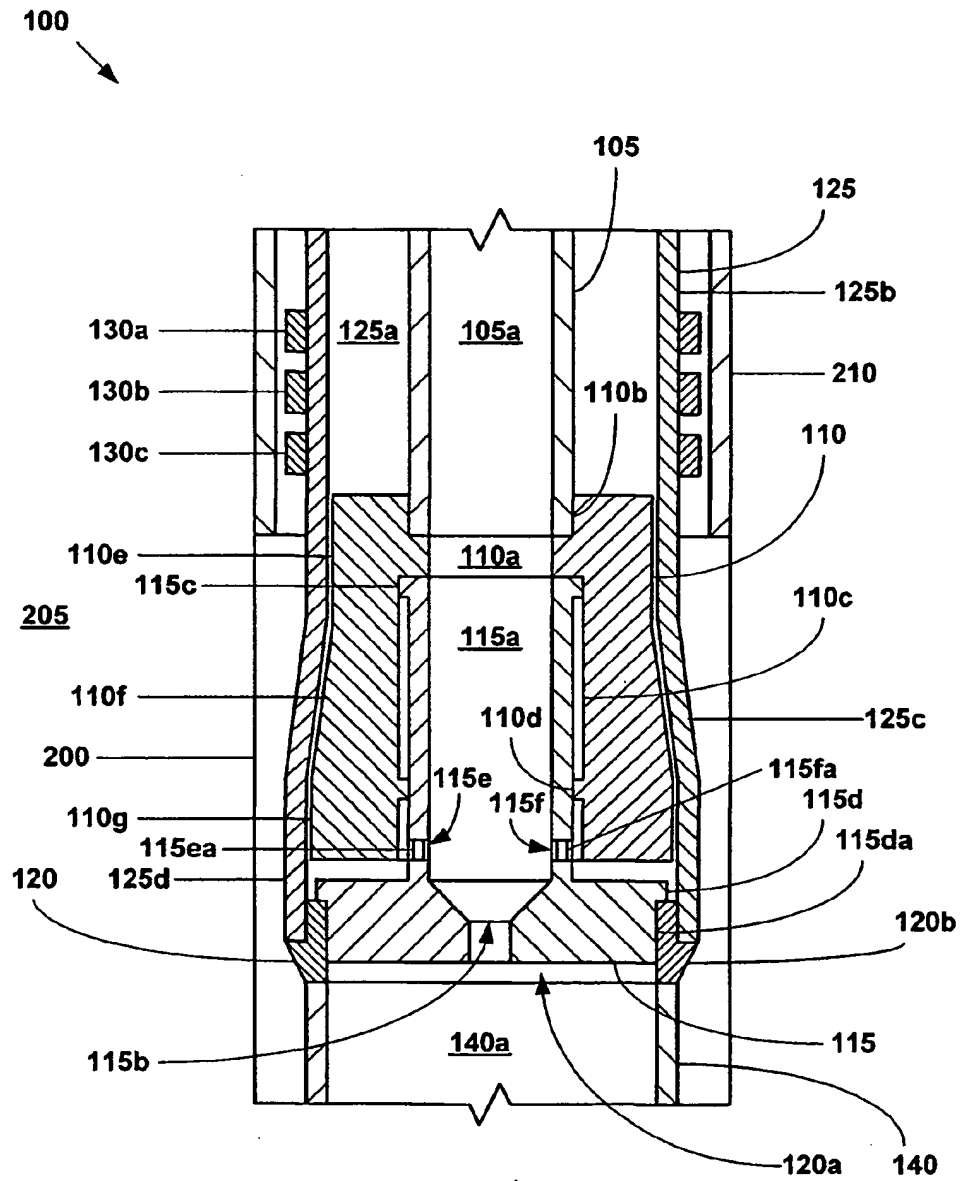
## Claims

- 1 1. A method of coupling a radially expandable tubular member to a preexisting structure,  
2 comprising:  
3 positioning the tubular member within the preexisting structure;  
4 injecting fluidic materials into the tubular member;  
5 sensing the operating pressure of the fluidic materials; and  
6 radially expanding and plastically deforming the tubular member into contact with the  
7 preexisting structure when the sensed operating pressure exceeds a predetermined  
8 amount.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein sensing the operating pressure includes:  
2 sensing the operating pressure of the fluidic materials within the tubular member.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 radially expanding and plastically deforming the tubular member using a tubular expansion  
3 cone; and  
4 movably coupling a tubular shoe to the tubular expansion cone.
- 1 4. An apparatus for coupling a radially expandable tubular member to a preexisting structure,  
2 comprising:  
3 a tubular support member including a first passage;  
4 a tubular expansion cone coupled to the tubular support member defining a second passage  
5 and including an internal flange;  
6 a tubular shoe movably received within the second passage of the tubular expansion cone  
7 defining one or more radial passages and a valveable passage fluidically coupled to the  
8 first passage and including an external flange for engaging the internal flange;  
9 one or more pressure relief valves positioned in corresponding ones of the radial passages;  
10 and an expandable tubular member movably coupled to the tubular expansion cone.
- 1 5. A system for coupling a radially expandable tubular member to a preexisting structure,  
2 comprising:  
3 means for positioning the tubular member within the preexisting structure;  
4 means for injecting fluidic materials into the tubular member;  
5 means for sensing the operating pressure of the fluidic materials; and

6 means for radially expanding the tubular member into contact with the preexisting structure  
7 when the sensed operating pressure exceeds a predetermined amount.

1 6. The system of claim 5, wherein the means for sensing the operating pressure includes:  
2 means for sensing the operating pressure of the fluidic materials within the tubular member.

1 7. The system of claim 5, further comprising:  
2 means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the tubular member using a tubular  
3 expansion cone; and  
4 means for movably coupling a tubular shoe to the tubular expansion cone.



**Fig. 1**

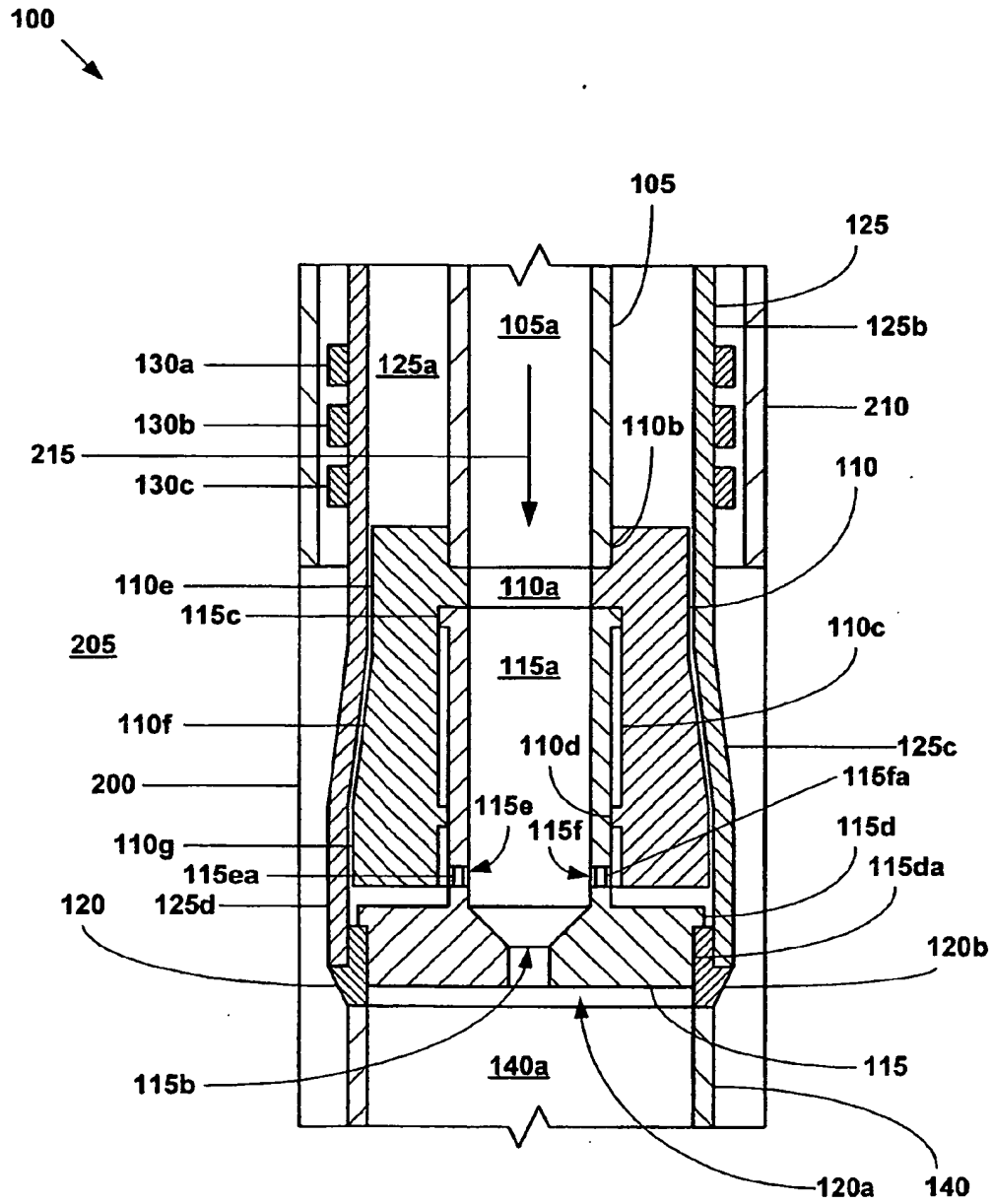


Fig. 2

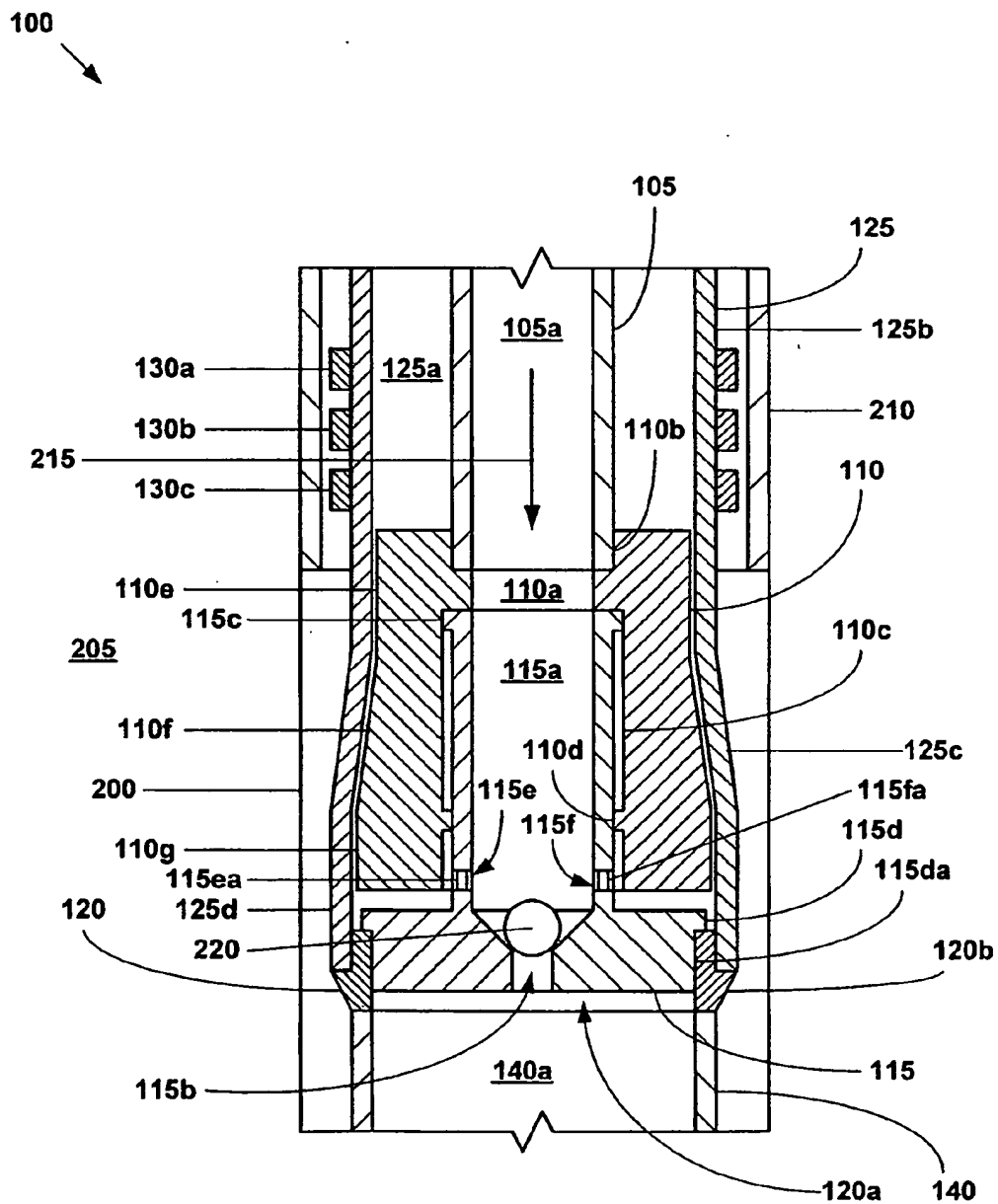
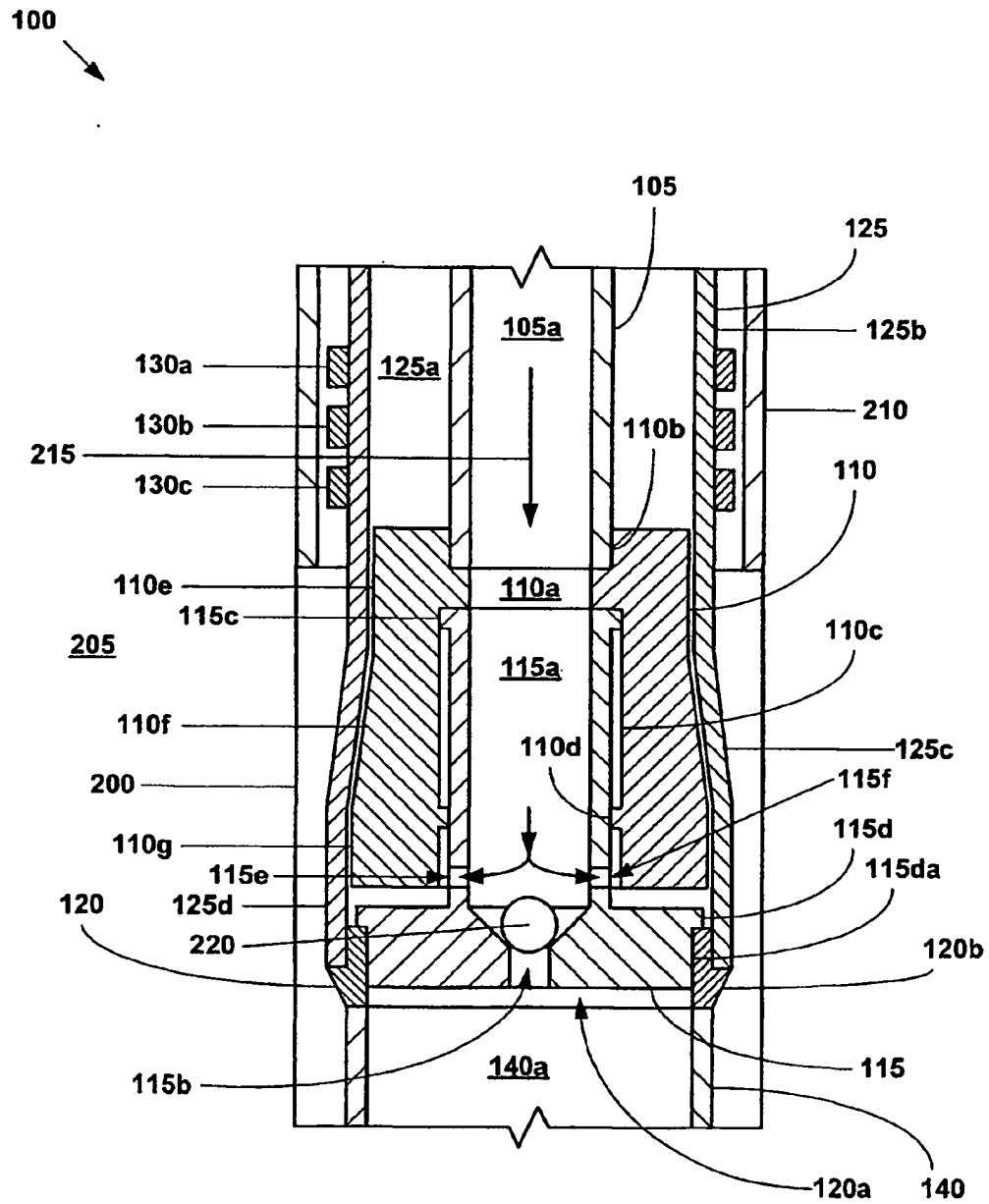


Fig. 3



**Fig. 4**

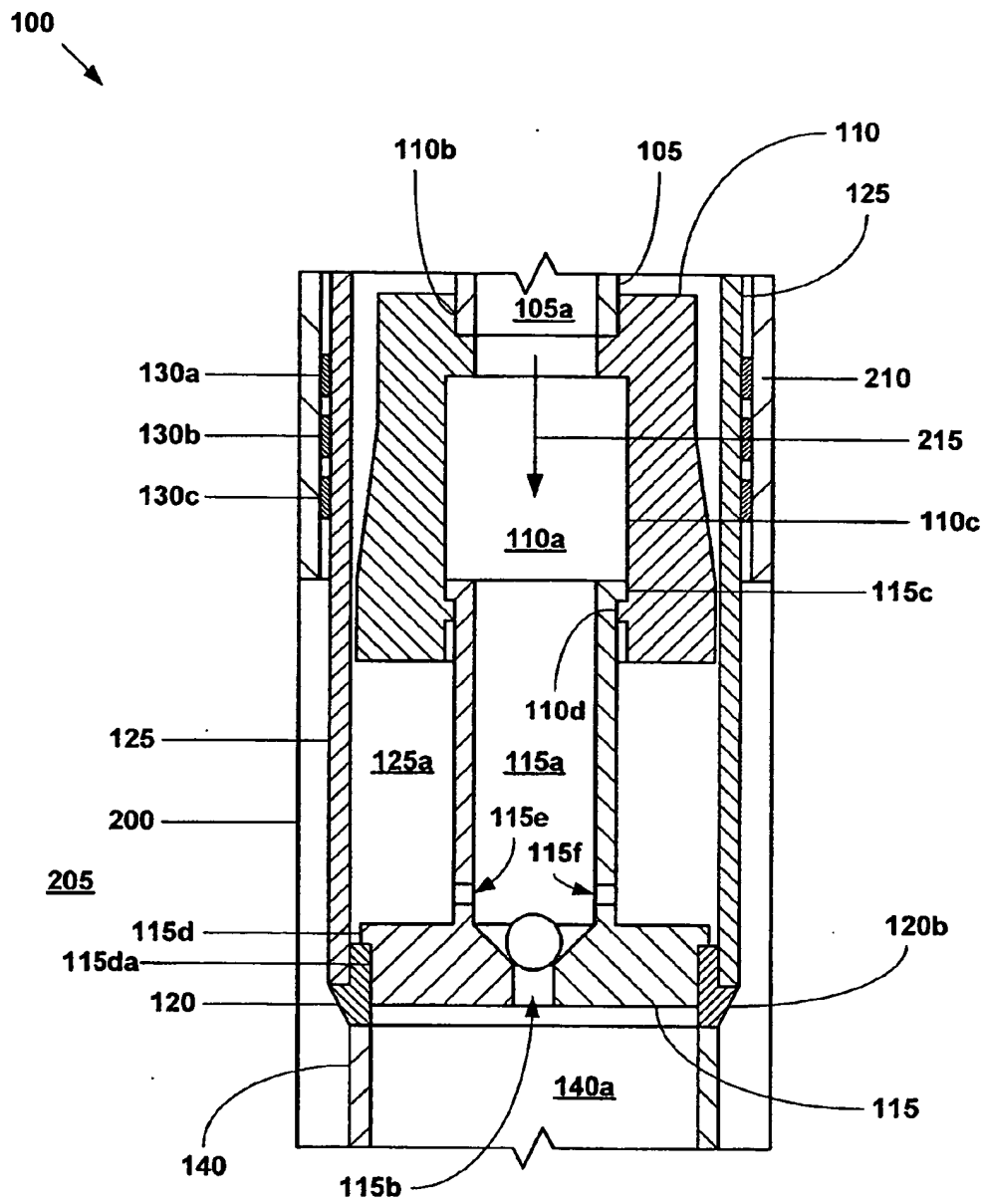


Fig. 5

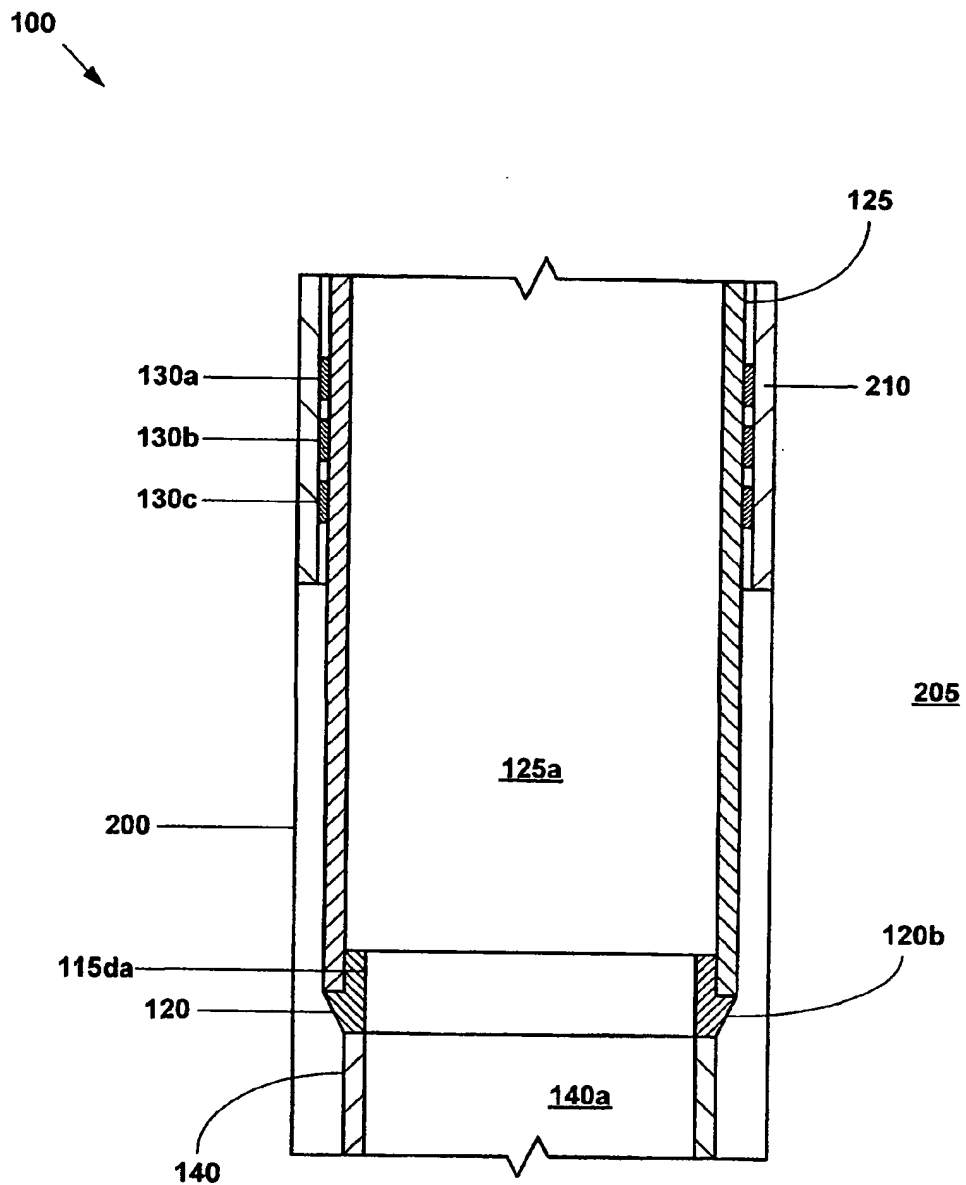


Fig. 6